

Merrimack County Bank  
214 North Main Street  
Concord  
Merrimack County  
New Hampshire

HABS No. NH-164

HABS  
NH,  
7-CON,  
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MERRIMACK COUNTY BANK

HABS No. NH-164

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NH,  
7-CON,  
5-

Location: 214 N. Main St, Concord, Merrimack County,  
New Hampshire

Present Owner: Christian Mutual Life Insurance Co.

Present Occupant: Same (home office)

Present Use: Home office, life insurance company

Brief statement  
of Significance:

Architecturally significant as good example of American interpretation of Adamesque style. Building housed the N. H. Historical Society in its early days, contained the law office of Franklin Pierce, the study of Dr. Bouton (historian of Concord) and has always been a landmark for the north end of Concord.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Sept 13, 1825 Concord Bank sells plot to Merrimack County Bank /Vol 19, p. 204, Merrimack County Registry of Deeds/. 1826 building built. Jan 29, 1869 Merrimack County Bank sells to Edward H. Rollins /Vol 198, p. 282/. June 12, 1869 Edward H. Rollins sells to New Hampshire Historical Society /Vol 195, p. 424/. Oct 30, 1952 New Hampshire Historical Society sells to Christian Mutual Life Insurance Company /Vol 723, p. 325/. Christian Mutual Life Insurance Company to date.
2. Date of Erection: 1826 /Records of Merrimack County Bank 1825-49, MS copy in NHHS Library/.
3. Architect: John Leach (1778-1865) /Records of Merrimack County Bank 1825-49, MS copy in NHHS Library/.

Builder, Suppliers, etc: Leach was architect, contractor, carpenter and joiner /Advertisement in New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette, Dec. 5, 1825/. Col. John Carter probably supplied the brick; see /New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette, May 15, 1826; see also Grace P. Amsden, A Capitol for New Hampshire, Typescript MS in NHHS Library, Chapter XXXIII, p. 15/.

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4. Original plans and construction: None known. Shallow inset blind arches on facade could have been inspired by Plate 53 of Asher Benjamin's American Builder's Companion, Boston, 1820. There are notes on the construction in the bank records:

Nov 21, 1825 "Voted that an alteration in the plan of the bank building adopted on the 26th of October last be made conformable to a plan exhibited to the board by Mr. John Leach, agreeably to which last mentioned plan said building is to be fifty feet front and thirty-two feet deep."

April 24, 1826 "Voted to alter the plan of said building so that the end walls in the third story be made twelve inches thick instead of eight inches, to extend to the top of the battlements."

The original plans are lost.

Records of the Merrimack County Bank 1825-49, MS copy in NHHS Library.

5. Notes on alterations and additions: In 1840 the top floor was adapted to a library for use by the N. H. Historical Society /Grace P. Amsden, A Capitol... Ch. XXXIII, p. 14/. In 1869 the N.H.H.S. made changes and repairs and transformed the interior (of the second story/?/) into a library; "structural defects existed and could not easily be remedied" /Dedication of the Building of the N.H. Historical Society, Concord, 1912, p. 12; see also "Minutes of the N. H. Historical Society", Vol II 1865-1909, for 9 June 1869 in N.H.H.S. Library/. In 1921 the building was thoroughly restored and the interior remodeled for use as a museum under the plans of Guy Lowell; classical 2 columned porch added to front and two story brick wing added to rear; first floor interior made into one large room. "Interior construction was entirely removed and rebuilt". /Reports of the N.H.H.S., 1921, Concord, N.H., pb by the Society, p. 17; see also: The New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, 1940 (pamphlet), p. 3/. In 1951 the interior was redone by Interior Decorator Dan Cooper of New York City; mainly paint color changes, furnishings, etc. /Concord Monitor, Jan. 9, 1953/.
6. Important old views: Dedication of the Building of the New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, 1912, p. 10. Photo of bank building showing the original front doors.

B. Historical Events connected with the Structure:

The building was planned to afford quarters for two banks on the ground floor and office rooms on the second floor. The top floor was planned for a public hall but in 1840 it was taken over by the N.H.H.S. Until 1921 the building had two entrances, the north one originally opening into the Merrimack County Bank. The south door opened unto the drug store of Dr. Samuel Morrill until the N. H. Savings Bank began business there in 1830. The second floor offices were occupied by various lawyers, among them being young Franklin Pierce, and sometimes public officials occupied these quarters. Dr. Bouton used one of the rooms as a study when he wrote the history of Concord. Grace F. Amsden, A Capitol..., Ch. XXXIII, p. 147.

Prepared by: Charles B. Wood, III  
N.H. Historical Soc.  
1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: General exterior aspect with its tall blind arcades is characteristic of New England architecture of the Federal period. For many years the building has been considered the "pride of the north end" (of Concord).

2. Condition of Fabric: Good; well maintained.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: 50 feet front, 32 feet deep.

2. Foundations: Stone (granite) ashlar under the old portion of the building; none visible beneath the rear ell. Level of present asphalt front walk is raised from original grade and thus obscures foundations.

3. Wall Construction: Brick, laid in common bond. Five inset (c. 4" deep) blind arches on facade with stone "impost" blocks. Iron stansion bolt brackets visible on all four walls. Four steps on each gable end.

4. Chimneys: One in each end wall; form central and top block in stepped gable ends. Simple moulding around chimney caps.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Front door embrasure is recessed and panelled. Above door is horizontal fanlight with leaded muntins in ovoid patterns. Six panel front door may be original.
  - b. Windows and shutters: 6 over 6 double hung wood sash. Window frames recessed 1 inch from exterior wall surface. One piece stone lintels over openings; stone sills beneath. Windows on rear and end walls are plain; i.e. no lintels or sills.
6. Porches, etc: Front porch consisting of two Ionic columns on pedestals and two Ionic pilasters, which support a two step architrave, plain frieze and dentilled and modillioned cornice. Low iron railing above. Installed in 1921 by Guy Lowell.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, Covering: Low angled pitched roof. Slate shingles. Copper sheathing over ridge. Ell roof flat.
- b. Framing: Six major trusses with king posts; ridge pole in pieces mortised between king posts. Mill (up and down) sawn roofers laid horizontally. Heating and ventilating ducts now installed in loft.
- c. Cornice, eaves: Heavy white painted wood cornice front and rear. Plancer contains modillion blocks with 24 guttae each and continuous bead moulding along front of building. None in rear. Ell has no cornice. No gutters, leaders or conductors.

C. Technical Descriptions of Interiors:

- 1. Floor plans: First floor contains central two storey "lobby" with side aisles on north, south and west. Stair in northwest corner. Second floor contains three enclosed offices which flank and look out (through windows) into the open lobby. Top (third) floor is divided into six rooms; this alteration performed in 1959.

2. Stairways: Main and only stair is in northwest corner of building; it is fitted into a well which is not open from floor to floor. Of modern construction (c. 1921).
3. Flooring: All modern hardwood.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Plaster, wallpaper and painted walls. First and second floor rooms have modern paneled dado and chair rail.
5. Doorways and doors: All modern, six panel.
6. Trim: All modern; all done in imitation of early nineteenth century woodwork.
7. Hardware: Mostly modern; old brass box lock on front door. Beautiful old wrought iron bracket supports modern chandelier in lobby.
8. Lighting: Electric, modern fixtures in antique style.
9. Heating: Originally fireplaces, then supplemented with coal furnace and steam radiators; now gas heater with hot air registers.

D. Site.

1. General setting and orientation: Facade faces toward the west, approximately 25 feet from curb stone of North Main Street.
2. Enclosures: Shrubbery hedges on north, east and south lines.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks, driveways, etc: Asphalt walk across front; semi-circular drive and parking space around rear of building.
5. Landscaping, gardens, etc: Three old elm trees on front property lines. Rest simple, not original.

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